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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Sadruddin Aga Khan urges Sanctions Committee to lift sanctions against Iraq to allow it to address urgent humanitarian needs.

◆ International Committee of the Red Cross evacuates dozens of people wounded in recent fighting in northern Iraq.

◆ In Geneva, members of Human Rights Committee criticize Iraq for concentrating on difficulties it faced as a result of Gulf crisis rather than on its own actions in human rights field.

◆ Third team of experts from International Atomic Energy Agency, back from Iraq, prepares report to Security Council and Secretary-General.

◆ Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar expresses hope for positive outcome to Middle East peace conference talks.

◆ China appeals to international community for $200 million in relief assistance for some 42 million people affected by recent floods.

◆ United Nations appeals for $376 million to meet basic needs of 25 million people in Horn of Africa. Coordinator for humanitarian assistance in Horn of Africa, James O.C. Jonah, travels to region at request of Secretary-General.

◆ President of African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), Nelson Mandela, indicates that senior South African officials were directly involved "in funding political activities in opposition to the ANC and bore direct responsibility for the murder, sometimes of entire African families".

◆ Talks open between Government of Guatemala and Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca on democratization and human rights.

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For information media—not an official record

The Security Council Sanctions Committee today was urged to consider lifting the sanctions against Iraq to allow that country to meet essential civilian needs.

The plea came from the Secretary-General's Executive Delegate on Humanitarian Affairs in the Gulf, Sadruddin Aga Khan, who has just completed a mission to the area. He told the Committee there was a clear and undeniable humanitarian need in Iraq and that it was absurd and indefensible for the United Nations to pay for these needs when numerous other urgent crises and disasters, from Bangladesh to the Horn of Africa, cried out for attention.

He said Iraq should be allowed to use funds from oil sales or use blocked accounts to meet essential needs. He called for a control mechanism and monitoring system to make sure the freed-up funds were spent to benefit people in need.

At a press briefing at Headquarters today, following a donors' meeting at the Canadian Mission to the United Nations, the Executive Delegate said action hinged on an acceptable control and monitoring mechanism. He was "encouraged by the interest and by the very detailed attention given by the Sanctions Committee to our report". He said the Chairman of the Committee had indicated that time was of the essence and that there was a feeling that the United Nations was "up against a very serious humanitarian crisis which could degenerate into a catastrophe rather quickly".

Outlining the situation currently facing Iraq, he said sewage treatment plants were paralysed, increasing the risk of water-borne diseases; prices had skyrocketed; stocks of food and medicine were running out; the social services network had broken down; and there was a whole pattern of criminality developing as people began to steal to feed their families. There was increasing violence and petty theft, and a general breakdown of law and order. If something was not done soon, famine could start appearing; the real test would come in the fall. He told correspondents that only $250 million had been received to date of the $450 million requested by the Secretary-General in April.

He said the Sanctions Committee would hold further consultations and another meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday, 24 July.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has informed the United Nations that it has evacuated dozens of people wounded in the recent fighting around the Iraqi town of Suleimaniyah, and has visited hundreds of people captured in the region.

According to an ICRC press release, the organization has prepared extra medical supplies which are ready to be sent to the northeast of the country if necessary.

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In Geneva, members of the Human Rights Committee have criticized Iraq for concentrating on the difficulties it faced as a result of the Gulf crisis rather than on its own actions in the field of human rights.

The comments came as the Committee took up Iraq's report on its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights -- which deals with such rights as freedom of movement, equality before the law and freedom of opinion and expression.

The Iraqi report concluded that Iraq could not implement the Covenant due to what it called the "systematic and deliberate violation of its right to self-determination, interference in its internal affairs and the denial of its people of their means of livelihood by means of a continued and unjustifiable economic embargo".

But Committee members stressed that the current situation was a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. They said the report did not meet the Committee's guidelines because it did not concentrate on Iraq's actions but on those of others. Members asked for more information on both the pre- and post-war periods, including extrajudicial killings, executions and disappearances, the use of chemical weapons, the death penalty, human rights violations in Kuwait and reported attempts to manufacture nuclear weapons.

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The third team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has now returned from Iraq and is preparing a report to the Secretary-General.

A press release issued today stated that the team was able "to inspect and place under Agency seals a considerable amount of nuclear material and a number of equipment items related to the newly disclosed Iraqi uranium enrichment programme".

The release said that while the team was able to obtain substantial information regarding the programme, much work and analysis remains to be done before any conclusions can be made as to the completeness of the Iraqi declarations to date".

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has expressed hope for a positive outcome to the current talks by United States Secretary of State James A. Baker on a peace conference in the Middle East.

A United Nations spokesman said today that the Secretary-General has been kept informed about Mr. Baker's progress on a possible Middle East peace conference. He said the Secretary-General wished the United States Secretary of State good luck and hoped that Israel would have a "constructive attitude".

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China has appealed to the United Nations and the international community for disaster relief assistance following severe floods that recently affected more than 42 million people.

The appeal, made on 11 July by China's Deputy Minister for Civil Affairs, was transmitted to the Secretary-General by China's Deputy Permanent Representative, Jin Yongjian, in a letter dated 15 July. The letter said more than $200 million, as well as materials and supplies, were urgently needed by the victims to meet critical relief and rehabilitation needs.

The Chinese official pointed out that the floods had caused serious health, environmental and structural damage; that it was difficult to reach victims in the flood-besieged villages to provide them with relief materials; and that the incidence of disease was as high as 25 per cent in the affected areas, with many victims suffering from dysentery, malaria and other diseases as a result of water pollution.

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The United Nations is appealing for $376 million to meet the basic needs of 25 million people in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya in the wake of drought and civil conflict that have caused massive population displacement in the area.

The figure was cited by the United Nations Coordinator for humanitarian assistance in the Horn of Africa, Under-Secretary-General James O.C. Jonah, at a donors' meeting in Geneva last Friday, in response to the critical situation in that region. Mr. Jonah said: "Unless we tackle this crisis situation, the world might go on for ever with these emergencies".

Mr. Jonah arrived in the area over the weekend, at the request of the Secretary-General, to try to smooth out political difficulties that might be impeding some of the emergency relief. He is scheduled to attend regional consultations on the Horn of Africa in Nairobi on 29 and 30 July. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, also arrived in the region over the weekend to conduct an on-the-spot assessment of the refugee situation.

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The President of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), Nelson Mandela, has indicated that there was evidence that senior South African officials had been directly involved "in funding political activities in opposition to the ANC and bore direct responsibility for the murder, sometimes of entire African families" in some areas of South Africa.

In a statement made available at United Nations Headquarters today, Mr. Mandela repeated the ANC's appeal for an independent judicial inquiry to uncover the facts relating to "this aspect of Government activity". He said it was evident that the Government was "pursuing a double agenda of talking peace while it wages war on the ANC and the democratic movement".

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He said in the statement that the ANC was taking the opportunity to alert the international community to what it called the "dangers entailed in a premature lifting of sanctions". He said such precipitate action would only serve "to reward those responsible for this blood-letting that has already taken a heavy toll on African life" in South Africa.

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A spokesman for the Secretary-General announced today that a new round of talks opened this morning in Mexico between representatives of the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). The talks will continue to deal with the first item of the general agenda agreed in Mexico on 26 April, namely, democratization and human rights.

Under the procedure agreed between the Government and URNG in Mexico in April, the talks are being held in the presence of the Conciliator, Monsignor Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, and the representative of the Secretary-General, Francesc Vendrell, acting as observer. The talks are scheduled to continue through Friday, 26 July.

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